# TfL suppresses report questioning effectiveness of low traffic neighbourhoods amid safety and traffic reduction evidence



Sir Sadiq Khan's administration at Transport for London (TfL) reportedly shelved a University of Westminster report that challenged the Mayor's claims about the effectiveness of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in reducing car use. The suppressed study, commissioned by TfL, found that while LTNs increased cycling activity, they had negligible effects on curbing car use or boosting walking. This finding contrasts sharply with Sir Sadiq’s previous assertions that LTNs significantly benefit the environment and reduce traffic congestion. Emails exchanged between TfL officials and researchers revealed concerns within the Mayor’s team about the report’s conclusions and a desire to manage how the findings would be presented publicly. The project’s funding was withdrawn last year, and the full report was never published, with officials citing its overly technical language and a lack of new insights as reasons for withholding it.

The unpublished research, which involved surveying more than 4,500 residents about their recent travel habits and correlating responses with their exposure to LTNs, concluded that increased cycling did not translate into reduced car journeys. It also found no significant changes in walking habits. Critics argue that the decision to suppress the report was politically motivated, as publishing it could have complicated the narrative supporting LTNs. John Stewart of Social and Environmental Justice criticised the move, stating it deprived policymakers of valuable evidence and distorted public perceptions of LTNs as primarily environmentally beneficial interventions.

Despite this, other independent research offers a more positive view of LTNs. A study by the University of Westminster focused on the London Borough of Lambeth demonstrated a modest but measurable reduction in daily driving distance—approximately 1.3 kilometres per resident—following LTN implementation. This suggests that LTNs can indeed reduce car use in certain contexts, potentially delivering public health benefits such as reduced pollution and road danger. Moreover, data from a joint study between the University of Westminster’s Active Travel Academy and the climate charity Possible highlighted substantial reductions in motor traffic on residential streets within LTNs, with an average decrease of 815 motor vehicles, underscoring their success in making neighbourhoods quieter and more pedestrian-friendly without major impact on main roads.

In terms of road safety, further research by Westminster in collaboration with institutions like the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Imperial College London found that LTNs significantly cut road injuries. Their findings revealed that pedestrian injuries within LTNs fell by 85%, contributing to safer urban environments and supporting broader public health goals such as London's Vision Zero ambition to eliminate road deaths and serious injuries. Analysis by Westminster Healthy Streets also confirms that LTNs improve safety for all modes of transport—walking, cycling, and driving—making journeys three to four times safer within these zones compared to boundary roads.

Nevertheless, the introduction of LTNs has not been without controversy. For example, in Streatham Wells, a newly implemented LTN reportedly caused severe traffic disruptions, with buses taking over two hours to travel under three miles and routes being extensively diverted. Local residents, businesses, and motorists have criticised such schemes as disruptive and chaotic. These real-world challenges underscore the complexity of implementing LTNs in busy urban contexts and fuel debates about their overall impact.

In summary, while the suppressed TfL-commissioned report casts doubt on the ability of LTNs to reduce car use, a broader body of academic research presents a more nuanced picture. LTNs appear to offer significant benefits in terms of increased cycling, improved safety, and reduced motor traffic in residential areas, though their effectiveness can vary by location and they may not uniformly reduce car dependency. The controversy around the withheld report highlights tensions between political narratives and emerging evidence, pointing to the need for transparent, balanced assessments to inform future transport policy in London.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15109357/Sadiq-Khans-Low-Traffic-areas-FAIL-car-secret.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15109357/Sadiq-Khans-Low-Traffic-areas-FAIL-car-secret.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-borough-cut-daily-driving-among-residents-by-13km-research-finds), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html), [[7]](https://www.wearepossible.org/press-releases/largest-ever-study-of-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-demonstrates-overwhelming-success-in-reducing-motor-traffic)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://westminsterstreets.org.uk/the-evidence-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/), [[5]](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/university-of-westminster-researchers-find-low-traffic-areas-have-major-pedestrian-safety-benefits)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15109357/Sadiq-Khans-Low-Traffic-areas-FAIL-car-secret.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15109357/Sadiq-Khans-Low-Traffic-areas-FAIL-car-secret.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-borough-cut-daily-driving-among-residents-by-13km-research-finds), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html), [[4]](https://westminsterstreets.org.uk/the-evidence-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/), [[5]](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/university-of-westminster-researchers-find-low-traffic-areas-have-major-pedestrian-safety-benefits), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html), [[7]](https://www.wearepossible.org/press-releases/largest-ever-study-of-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-demonstrates-overwhelming-success-in-reducing-motor-traffic)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15109357/Sadiq-Khans-Low-Traffic-areas-FAIL-car-secret.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-borough-cut-daily-driving-among-residents-by-13km-research-finds> - A study by the University of Westminster found that residents in the London Borough of Lambeth reduced their daily driving by 1.3 km after the introduction of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). The research indicates that LTNs can effectively decrease driving levels in inner-city areas, potentially leading to public health benefits such as reduced road danger, air pollution, and noise. The study highlights that while LTNs aim to make driving less convenient and promote walking and cycling, they have been successful in reducing car use without significantly affecting car ownership rates.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html> - Transport for London (TfL) reportedly suppressed a taxpayer-funded study by the University of Westminster, which found that low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) do not reduce car use. The research indicated that while LTNs increased cycling, they failed to encourage people to drive less or walk more. Emails between TfL and the university revealed concerns about the report's findings, leading to its suppression. TfL stated that the study did not offer sufficient new insights to justify further investment.
4. <https://westminsterstreets.org.uk/the-evidence-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/> - An analysis by Westminster Healthy Streets presents evidence on the impact of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in London. The study highlights that LTNs have significantly reduced road danger, with walking, cycling, and driving becoming 3-4 times safer per trip within LTNs compared to boundary roads. Additionally, LTNs have led to substantial increases in cycling, especially among children, and have contributed to reductions in car ownership. The research also addresses concerns about social equity, finding no major issues in the implementation of LTNs across different demographics.
5. <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/university-of-westminster-researchers-find-low-traffic-areas-have-major-pedestrian-safety-benefits> - Researchers from the University of Westminster, in collaboration with The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Imperial College London, found that low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) installed in London in 2020 halved the number of road injuries in those areas compared to areas without these measures. The study revealed an 85% decrease in pedestrian injuries within LTNs, indicating significant safety benefits for pedestrians. The research suggests that LTNs play a crucial role in enhancing pedestrian safety and could contribute to achieving Vision Zero goals of no deaths or serious injuries.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html> - A comprehensive study by the University of Westminster's Active Travel Academy and the climate charity Possible found that low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) have substantially reduced motor traffic in residential areas without significantly impacting nearby main roads. The research analysed data from 46 LTNs and concluded that these schemes have been overwhelmingly successful in decreasing traffic levels within residential zones, highlighting their effectiveness in promoting safer and more pleasant environments for residents.
7. <https://www.wearepossible.org/press-releases/largest-ever-study-of-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-in-london-demonstrates-overwhelming-success-in-reducing-motor-traffic> - A joint study by climate charity Possible and the University of Westminster’s Active Travel Academy, the largest of its kind in London, demonstrated that low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) lead to substantial reductions in motor traffic. The research found a mean average decrease of 815 motor vehicles on roads within LTNs, indicating a significant overall reduction in traffic. The study suggests that LTNs are effective in creating quieter, more pedestrian-friendly streets and can contribute to environmental and public health improvements.